High turnout expected in election for courthouse control

Continued from Page 1

Lucille M. Trench. They are all on record against the Pump, but disagree on what to do about it.

The fifth candidate is Joseph A. Thompson, who is running a write-in race. He is a member of the Neshaminy Water Resources Authority, and the only candidate supporting the Point Pleasant project.

Warren, 39, of Warminster, is a former high school history teacher and track coach from William Tennent Senior High School. Mrs. Zettick, 49, is a past supervisor from Middletown Township.

Fonash, 41, is a stockbroker from Doylestown and past president of the Central Bucks School Board; and Mrs. Trench, 56, of Middletown, is the Bucks recorder of deeds.

Thompson, 46, is from Upper Southampton. He is a retired engineer who worked for the Philadelphia water department for 31 years.

For Democrats, the vote will show whether the electorate accepted their definition of a "full-time" work — one that has been attacked repeatedly by the Republicans.

For Republicans, the vote will tell whether they stand together in spite of divisions over the Pump.

The Pump split the GOP in the May primary when unendorsed anti-Pump Republican Charles W. McHenry polled about 28,700 votes to Mrs. Zettick's 34,200 and Warren's 37,000.

Warren and Mrs. Zettick ran with party backing as pro-Pump candidates. In the past six months they have had to negotiate a hairpin political turnaround.

In 1979 they won office running in favor of the Pump. Over the next three and a half years they backed it all the way, approving contracts with Philadelphia Electric Co. and Montgomery County, sanctioning plans and authorizing work to begin.

When opponents of the project pushed for a referendum on the Pump, Warren and Mrs. Zettick argued against it. Warren said he was philosophically opposed to government by referendum.

Mrs. Zettick said she thought referendums were valid, but only before a project is under way. Voters sanctioned the project in the election of 1979, she said.

But the board of elections put the project on the May ballot, and the two Republicans pledged to abide by its results. On May 18 they found themselves backing a position contrary to their entire political record.

They quickly called for a construction halt, and sent letters announcing their new position to PECO, Montgomery County and regulatory agencies. They backed legal efforts to stop the project, and have announced a plan to stop it by changing the membership of the NWRA.

The term of NWRA chairman Joseph E. Johnson expires in January, and the GOP commissioners say they will replace him with someone willing to join with two other board members and shut down the project.

The Democrats argue that this is an unreliable plan because it relies on the cooperation of Republicans on the NWRA who have made some ambiguous statements about the project.

Comments by GOP party chairman Harry W. Fawkes increased these doubts in September when he said it was possible that the Republican loyalists on the NWRA might vote to keep building the Pump if the anti-Pump activists get "too nasty" during the election. That was a "scenario" being discussed in some circles, not his idea, he added.

Fonash and Mrs. Trench want the commissioners to pass an ordinance to take the project away from the NWRA and shut it down themselves.

Warren and Mrs. Zettick maintain this would be financially dangerous, leaving the county's tax base vulnerable to lawsuits and damage claims. And it would allow work to continue on the Pump for two or three years while the issue was settled in court. It is safer and faster to let the NWRA stop its own project and face the financial consequences, they say.

The Republicans have attacked their Democratic opponents about whether they will be "full-time commissioners."

Mrs. Zettick and Warren questioned how Mrs. Trench could be a full-time commissioner and a full-time recorder of deeds at the same time.

Mrs. Trench plans to keep her recorder of deeds job if elected commissioner, and has promised to be full time in both roles. By keeping her recorder's job until the term expires two years from now, she prevents a Republican governor from appointing her replacement.

Mrs. Trench has said she will delegate some of the recorder work to her deputies and work overtime to be full time in both jobs. She does not intend to seek re-election to the post. She would only collect her commissioners' salary — $27,000 a year.

The Republicans have also attacked Fonash for not spending enough time in the courthouse. Mrs. Zettick once said Fonash was only there "five hours a week." The commissioners are not required by law to work full time, but all five candidates have promised to do so.

Fonash called Mrs. Zettick's remark "absurd." He said he has never missed an important meeting or vote, and has always put county business first. "The job has consumed me for four years," he said.

Fonash, like Warren and Mrs. Zettick, said he would be a full-time commissioner four years ago. Mrs. Zettick turned her advertising business over to her husband, and Warren quit his teaching job, although he has coached cross country in the afternoons for two months during the past two seasons. Fonash has continued in his stockbroker business.

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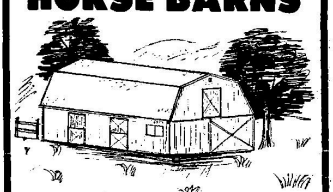

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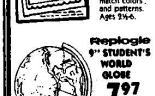

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